



Connected Histories – Recovering Oral History and Social History in Solomon Islands

Monday 4 November 3pm – 4pm

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Location

Larry Saha Room

Haydon-Allen Building #22, Room 2175,
University Avenue, ANU

My research explored different approaches to oral history to recover individual and social history in Solomon Islands since the end of the Pacific War in 1945. I gathered archival materials, life histories, and oral testimonies of older islanders and expatriates who grew up during the colonial era (1893-1978) and worked in the independence era (1978-2016). More specifically, my three case studies consisted of recording the life histories of four public figures in politics, government, and civil society; five Australian missionary nurses who worked together on Malaita from 1968 to 1984; and 25 nurses who trained in the colonial nursing system and became senior nursing officers after independence. The analysis connects the lives and careers of these participants – at the micro level – with the social history of Solomon Islands at the meso- and macro-levels. I also explore practical and theoretical issues involved in doing oral history through an explanatory model with four domains (Visual-Oral-Textual-Numerical). ‘When a person dies, a library is lost’ is a common aphorism to which I add, ‘and when an oral history is recorded, a library is saved’.

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